

# etc

A portrait of Gibril Wilson, a young Black man with a short haircut, wearing dark sunglasses, a black leather jacket, and a grey t-shirt with 'HYPERO' and a star graphic. He is looking slightly to the side with a neutral expression. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with green foliage.

**'White Night'  
in Jonestown**

**Phelan's  
Firefighters**

**An Armory  
of Porn**

**Gibril Wilson**

**City's  
'Super'  
Hero**





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On the cover: Gibril Wilson, who played for City College, has a Super Bowl ring and a \$39 million contract with the Oakland Raiders. Photo by Jennifer Nichols

## Letters to the Editor

### Down and Out in San Francisco

**Editor:** Read your article on homelessness (Homeless for the Weekend / Fall 2007). Your decision to temporarily experience that lifestyle reminds me of Orwell, who tried something similar, but for a much longer time, in "Down and Out in Paris and London."

Obviously, for you or me or most people, homelessness is so unpleasant that we would do almost anything to avoid it. But it's a mistake to conclude that nobody chooses to be homeless. Incredible as it may seem, there are some people who prefer the freedom of a bum's life.

Lest you accuse me of making this up, I'd like to recommend a brilliant book called "Life at the Bottom" by a British physician named Theodore Dalrymple, who worked with criminals and slum-dwellers. In one essay, "Free to Choose," he describes the homeless situation in Britain — not only the street people themselves but the shelters and other resources available to them. Dalrymple's work brought him into contact with quite a few men who preferred the idleness and adventure of the streets to the pressures of respectability.

He writes: "The life they have chosen is not without its compensations. Once they have overcome their initial revolution at the physical conditions in which they have decided

to live, they find themselves secure ... These men know, for example, that there are hostels everywhere, in every town and city, that will take them in, feed them, and keep them warm, whatever may happen and whether the market is bullish or bearish. They have no fear of failure and are utterly without the constraint of routine: Their only daily task is to appear on time for a meal, and their only weekly task is to collect their Social Security. Moreover, they are part of a fraternity — quarrelsome and occasionally violent, perhaps, but also tolerant and often amusing. Illness goes with the territory, but a general hospital is never far away, and treatment is free."

Please don't misunderstand me: I'm not saying society should do less for the homeless. I'm saying that people are extremely varied and that homelessness will never go away as long as some people prefer it.

Diana Blackwell  
San Francisco

### Letters welcome

We invite readers to send letters to the editor. Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.

E-mail us at: [etc\\_letters@yahoo.com](mailto:etc_letters@yahoo.com).



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- > Magazine Cover Design:
  - Honorable Mention



## Editor's Note

How far will our students go after they leave City College? And to what ends? We've chased down their stories from Sierra Leone to Cairo to Beijing to Florence to Jonestown ... We've followed them into smoke-filled rooms, dungeons of pleasure and pain, and all the way to the Super Bowl. The stories in this issue of Etc. Magazine showcase how far our students have gone and what they've done.

Some are about the journey. Experience firsthand the struggles of a professional mountain biker and a student in Egypt trying to learn Arabic while freelancing as a foreign correspondent. Study abroad with some of our students who learned about different cultures.

Some of the stories are about reaching your destination. Gibril Wilson made it to the Super Bowl. Marty Arbunich became editor and publisher of his own magazine. The fire-



Alex Dixon

fighters of House 15, most of whom are City College alumni, found a second home across the street from their alma mater.

Some of our students and alumni walk down forbidden paths. One student is a makeup artist for Kink.com. She works a few blocks from the new Mission Campus, in San Francisco's historic Armory building — now a porn palace. In another story, two alumni were in Guyana 30 years ago when more than 900 members of the Peoples Temple drank cyanide-laced Flavor Aid and died. One of them had made the trip there to try to bring his daughter home.

We've found that the stories about our students, faculty and alumni can be as interesting and varied as the cultures they come from, the careers they've pursued and the accomplishments they've made.

For this issue, we didn't have to look far. We've uncovered in our midst eight stories that brought us from adversity, ambition and curiosity to the limits of where life can take us academically, professionally and geographically.

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<b>JOUR 22 Feature Writing</b>					
77857	T R	11:00-12:30 PM	1125 Valencia St. 217	Staff	
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<b>JOUR 29 Magazine Editing &amp; Production</b>					
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<b>JOUR 31 Internship Experience</b>					
77861	Exp	HOURS ARR	BNGL 214	Staff	
<b>JOUR 37 Intro to Photojournalism</b>					
77858	T R	9:30-11:00 AM	1125 Valencia St. 217	Lifland	
76717	W	6:30-9:30 PM	1125 Valencia St. 217	Lifland	

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## etc. magazine

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This issue of Etc. Magazine was produced in the Media Studies Center on Mission Campus.





*Stephanie Rice, an Etc. Magazine staff writer who traveled to Egypt this semester to study Arabic, looks out upon the Sphinx and the Great Pyramids.*

# Our reporter in Cairo

Story and Photography by Stephanie Rice

**K**icking and shoving, the men claw at each other as they jostle to reach a small wooden kiosk on the side of a dusty road. One man jumps onto the back of another, trying to force his way over the top of the mob.

I watch in disbelief, sure they're going to rip the structure, and each other, apart. The rickety shack at the center of the fury is a bread stand in a poor Cairo neighborhood, and the men are frantically trying to reach the window to buy cheap, government-subsidized bread.

I've seen things like this on CNN from the safety of my San Francisco apartment, but I can't believe I'm standing 15 feet away from a wooden hut as men scream at each other in Arabic, elbows flying as they desperately reach for the fresh-baked bread.

This is not an isolated incident. The New York Times reported that between March and April, 11 people were killed here in fights in lines just like this one.

I finally force myself to look away and keep walking down

the sandy street, the commotion fading into the distance behind me.

\* \* \*

I came to Egypt to study Arabic and, after a few semesters of journalism classes at City College and writing for small San Francisco papers, to pretend to be a foreign correspondent for a few months.

This hectic city of 17 million can be overwhelming. Everyone is crushed together in a maze of concrete and sand, and although dozens of young policemen brandishing rifles line every street, it feels like no one is really in charge.

Donkeys and horses plod along calmly, sharing the traffic-choked streets with beat-up taxis. Scantly clad mannequins gaze blankly through department store windows as women in gauzy black veils hurry by, some balancing bags of laundry or groceries on their heads.

Behind the gleaming façade of high-rise hotels and the majestic pyramids that enchant tourists as they're shuttled



through the city, there's a sense of desperation hanging in the smoggy air.

Even the college educated struggle to find jobs, and the few who do make barely enough to survive. So people line the streets selling anything and everything, government employees drive taxis after work, and bread riots like the one I stumbled upon have become common.

In European-style cafes downtown, university students sip lattes and type furiously on laptops as Gwen Stefani and Faith Hill blare from speakers, drowning out the call to prayer from nearby mosques. Across the street from the cafes, men in traditional long robes sit in tea rooms smoking water pipes and watch the younger generation with a combination of amusement and suspicion.

Sometimes it's hard to tell if the old and new are coexisting or crashing into each other.

\* \* \*

My first night, I wondered if I'd be able to exist here for five months.

After a high-speed taxi ride from the airport, I found myself in a hotel that made Motel 6 seem luxurious. I paced the floor of the dingy room at 1 a.m., my shoes leaving grooves in the mismatched zebra- and flower-print throw rugs. I was exhausted but not about to touch the furry, electric-blue comforter draped over the bed.

Warily, I peered through the dirty window at the veil of smog blanketing the city, visible even against the night sky. As I watched the murky Nile lazily wind through the grime, I tried to remember why I'd left behind luxuries like soy cappuccinos and organic grocery stores to spend five months in one of the most polluted cities in the world.

The next day I switched hotels and called my parents in Oregon.

"Well, I don't know," my mom said after I'd relayed my adventures over a staticky phone line. "Are you really going to stay there? Maybe you should just come home."

After we hung up, I considered staying for an entire year.

\* \* \*

Three days later, I moved into an apartment in Mohandesin, a crowded, middle-class neighborhood with wide, dusty streets where meandering donkeys cause traffic jams and smiling children with dirty faces sell blue flowers.

My landlady, Magda, was an elegant middle-aged woman who wore a shapeless black robe and loosely wrapped head-

scarf that revealed strands of dark hair tinged with gray.

She spoke excellent English and moved through the room as if she were annoyed that there were other people in it. With a steely gaze that could intimidate any repairman into lowering his price and a commanding voice that oozed insincerity, Magda reminded me of a villain from a Disney movie.

The first time I met her, she practically purred as she showered me with compliments and encouraged me to sign the lease immediately.

"There are new students coming every day," she said. "The flat will not be here tomorrow." Later I learned the apartment had actually been vacant for several months.

My new home, like all apartment buildings in Cairo, came with several doormen, known as "bowabs." Bowabs usually don't look particularly intimidating, lounging on the front steps in their long robes and sandals, but if anyone's in charge in this city, it's them.

Whether they're warding off angry taxi drivers, carrying heavy bags of groceries, breaking up street fights, or hunting down English-language newspapers, these men are invaluable — especially for foreigners struggling to figure out the rules of a city that seemingly has none.

Bowabs tend to be social creatures. I would return home every evening to a bowab block party on my front steps.

Most are respectful and won't talk to women unless they're acknowledged first, but once I nodded hello, I'd be greeted with a chorus of "Salaam!" and "Amrika good! Welcome!"

Bowabs also specialize in minor plumbing and electrical work, and since Magda didn't share my strong feelings about the importance of having hot water and working lights on a regular basis, my bowabs spent a lot of time in my apartment.

After a month of sporadic hot water and electricity, I left Mohandessin to join the rest of Cairo's foreign population in Zamalek, an island suburb with quiet, tree-lined streets, a Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf cafe, and very few donkeys.

\* \* \*

On my way to a supermarket in my new neighborhood one evening, I almost stepped on a young woman huddled against a concrete building with her hand outstretched. Draped in a black abaya and headscarf, she seemed to blend into the shadows.

I walked past quickly, not wanting to make eye contact. But out of the corner of my eye I saw the toddler sitting next to



*Men smoking water pipes on the streets of Cairo are a common sight.*



her, and the infant in her arms started to cry.

Feeling guilty, I returned a few minutes later with fruit and two small boxes of milk. She looked up at me as she took the food, and I realized she was about my age, early- to mid-20s. She handed one of the milk boxes to her son, a smiling little boy wearing filthy sweats and no shoes.

A small stack of one-pound notes (worth about 15 cents each) sat in front of her on the sidewalk, and I wondered where she would go to buy food — certainly the Western-style grocery store I'd just left wouldn't allow her in. Neither would the cafe around the corner where I spent my days writing and doing my best to eavesdrop on college students gossiping in Arabic.

I walked away again, still feeling guilty, her baby's cries following me down the street.

More than 40 percent of Egyptian women are illiterate (compared with 18

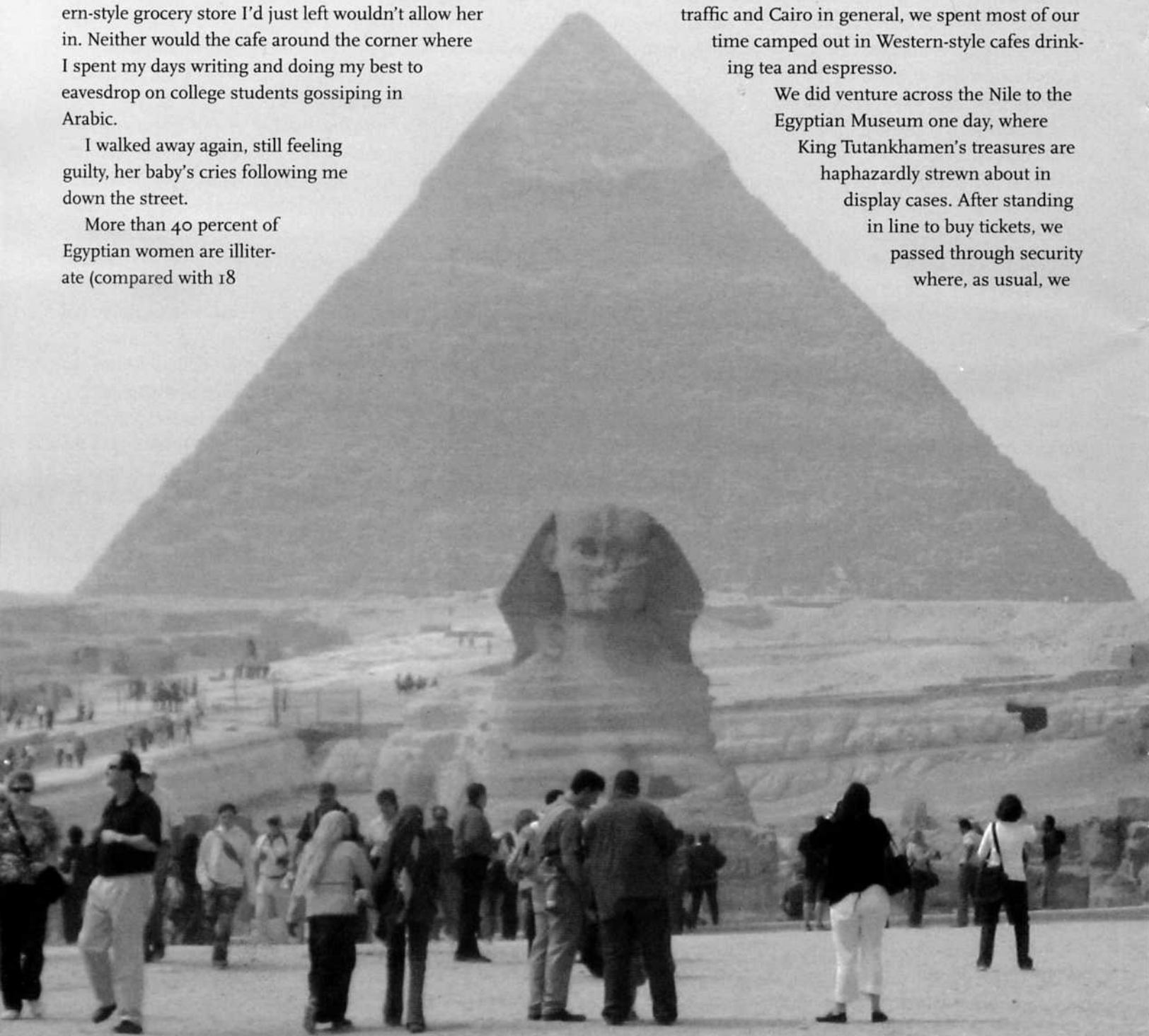
percent of men), according to the government, and women and children make up most of the country's homeless.

Egypt's economy is growing — 7 percent last year, according to the World Bank. But for the women begging silently from the shadows, or the men coming to blows over stacks of flatbread, it's just not making any difference.

\* \* \*

During my second month in Egypt, my mom came to visit, and since she was horrified by the smog, the traffic and Cairo in general, we spent most of our time camped out in Western-style cafes drinking tea and espresso.

We did venture across the Nile to the Egyptian Museum one day, where King Tutankhamen's treasures are haphazardly strewn about in display cases. After standing in line to buy tickets, we passed through security where, as usual, we



*The Sphinx and the Great Pyramids of Egypt, which date back to 2,570 BC, are located in Giza, 20 kilometers from Cairo.*



both set off the metal detectors.

I've set off metal detectors in almost every major hotel and government building in Cairo. Typically the police just smile and wave me through, sometimes apologizing for the annoying loud beep.

The day at the museum, the policeman looked suspiciously at my mom.

"You have knife?" he asked.

She looked at him incredulously as I tried not to laugh. My mother might get a little testy if she doesn't get French-pressed coffee within half an hour of waking up, but she's not exactly the knife-wielding type.

"No. No knife," I told him.

"OK," he said cheerfully, apparently not in the mood for any further questioning.

After wandering through pharaonic Egypt for a few hours, we headed to my favorite takeout place downtown. I paid the cashier at the front and we went to the counter in back to retrieve our order.

"Amrika?" the clerk behind the counter asked.

We nodded, and a broad smile spread over his face. "Welcome!"

"Your mother?" he asked me, gesturing toward my mom.

"Yes," I told him, and the smile grew even bigger. "Good, good. Welcome! Welcome to Egypt!"

He spun around to retrieve my lentil soup, then turned back, frowning slightly.

"Do you like George Boosh?" he asked.

"No, no. No one likes Bush," my mom assured him.

"OK. Welcome!" His smile returned, and he handed over our soup and falafel.

\* \* \*

I can't imagine what it will be like back in San Francisco. Life is full volume in Cairo, and the chaos is as addicting as it is infuriating. Much of what horrified me at first — the

smog, the noise, the sea of rifle-toting policemen — has become normal. Right now, it's the soy cappuccinos and organic grocery stores that seem a little odd.

*Wearily, I peered through the dirty window  
at the veil of smog blanketing the city,  
visible even against the night sky.*

I've actually come to enjoy haggling over \$2 taxi rides and clawing my way on and off the women's car on the subway, wedged between university students who wear tight clothing and headscarves, and women shrouded in black, only their eyes visible through slits in the fabric.

I feel like I've crossed through the looking glass to another world, and it seems very strange that as Etc. Magazine goes to print, I'll be on a British Airways flight headed back to reality.

Coming here has given me a perspective no college course or CNN documentary ever could. And that will last long after I return to San Francisco and finally wash Egypt's sands from my hair and skin.









*Sophie Siow was 22  
when she visited the  
Great Wall of China.*

Photo by Sophie Siow



Photo by Peter Bicknell

*City College students Nikki Gentile, Mecah Cozzi and Ashley Syversten visited the Leaning Tower of Pisa as part of their study abroad experience.*

## *Museums, churches and ancient palaces became their classrooms*

**By Malou Flowers**

**T**hree students. Three countries. Three different experiences. Although most students sit in class and listen to lectures, a growing number travel far beyond the boundaries of campus to get an education.

Take Sophie, Peter and Leah, for example. They don't know each other, but they have something in common. Each wanted to travel and did so through City College's Study Abroad Program. They left the comforts of home to study and live in countries they knew little about. Museums and ancient palaces became their classrooms. The souvenirs from their trips were not keychains depicting flags or shot glasses bearing a country's name, but life-changing experiences that would enrich them for the rest of their lives.

They took their education a step further — and farther. The lessons and principles they learned by being alone in a foreign country gave them a new, global perspective.

"City College is one of the few community colleges in the U.S. to offer study abroad programs," says Jill Heffron, the program's coordinator. City College has consistently ranked among the top 10 community colleges in the nation in terms of number of students studying abroad.

This past winter, for instance, students traveled to Mexico City, Cuernavaca, Xalapa, Nautla and Puebla to study Diego Rivera murals and other Mexican art.

This summer, groups will study in Oaxaca, Mexico;

Beijing, China; and Johannesburg, South Africa. Next fall, programs will be offered in Florence, Italy and Paris, France. Next spring — Madrid, Spain.

\* \* \*

Sophie Siow, 22, says she's "Hong Kongese" — not Chinese. She emigrated to San Francisco two and a half years ago, but grew up in Hong Kong, a modern city and booming financial center. Until recently, Siow had only been to mainland China once. When she was 8 years old, she went to Guangdong Province — 50 miles from Hong Kong.

She remembered it as an uncivilized place. "They were less educated, rude and had bad hygiene," she says.

After moving to the United States and reading several books about the Chinese cultural revolution of the late '80s, Siow felt compelled to see if the country had changed. Last June, as part of City College's Study Abroad Program, she studied Chinese culture and Mandarin at the Beijing University of Post and Telecommunications.

The Beijing she thought she knew was an old city with old ways. The city she would grow to love and admire was anything but. The streets of Beijing branch out like arteries — full of lights and towering modern buildings. In the distance, beyond the smog that never lifts, lie the Great Wall, the Forbidden Palace and the Temple of Heaven. Siow's first rickshaw ride through the ancient hutongs — narrow alleyways formed by the courtyard residences found only in China — brought her to a former residence of one of the emperor's wives. A family has made it into a makeshift restaurant, serving food in the kitchen and living room. In the evening, Siow would go to Houhai Lake, just outside of the hutong district. Here, tea houses resemble Starbucks, but instead of serving muffins or scones, they offer noodles and tofu soup.

On weekends, teachers took students to restaurants to sample cuisines from Yunan, Schezuan, Hunan and other Chinese provinces.

"The best Peking duck I ever ate was at Pian Yi Fang off Ya'nan Road," Siow says. Most restaurants serve everything fresh, bought that morning from open-air markets. They sell everything from fresh vegetables to fried sea horses, sea stars and scorpions. Siow sometimes took her meals at the university cafeteria, where 40 cents buys a meal of soup, tofu, meat

and vegetables, and fried rice.

The bathrooms — nothing but large, open rooms with holes in the ground — took some getting used to.

A month in Beijing was not enough. She had fallen in love with the city and its people. Now a philosophy major at UCLA, Siow is eager to return to China once she graduates. She hopes to go back to work as a missionary and study law in Beijing. For someone who originally couldn't identify with her roots, she saw China with new eyes and now proudly boasts about her Chinese heritage.

\* \* \*

A sunset illuminates the sky behind the duomo of Santa Maria del Fiore, a pink and green marble cathedral in Florence, Italy. Women wearing stilettos drive Vespas through narrow streets crowded with pedestrians. It's a stark contrast to the desert that Peter Bicknell, 26, was used to seeing.

His career in the Army took him to Kuwait, Korea and Afghanistan. He trained in the deserts of the Middle East, struggled with the language barrier and became curious about the rest of the world. "I love being out of my element," he says.

With the money he saved from his military service, he decided to go to Florence. He could not read, write or speak Italian, but it mattered little. After all, he had survived a few years

in less hospitable places.

A business major at Orange Coast College in Southern California, in 2003 he enrolled in City College's Study Abroad Program. By semester's end, he had learned Italian and had studied art history at the birthplace of the Renaissance.

He lived in an apartment near the center of the city. Breakfast was a shot of espresso and a croissant. Class started at 10 a.m. and lasted a few hours. The classroom was usually a museum or a church. For the remainder of the day he was free to explore Florence. Bicknell and his friends visited Austria, France and Belgium on weekends. Over the course of the semester, he explored 17 different countries.

Though Florence is renowned for its art museums, it was the Italian people and their simple way of life that captivated Bicknell. Old men sat in piazzas discussing politics as boys played impromptu games of soccer on ancient cobblestone paths. "I got to see what mattered to people here," he says. He



Photo by Sophie Siow

*Sophie Siow visited the Tian Tan in Beijing last year with City College students Caleb Strange, Rudi DiPrima and Ron Matestic.*





Photo Courtesy of Leah Weitz

*City College student Leah Weitz learned to speak French and studied art history as part of her study abroad program in Paris.*

learned to appreciate three-hour meals in a place where life centers on conversation and the camaraderie of friends.

After his first trip, Bicknell went to Italy again in the fall of 2006 to create a promotional video for the Florence study abroad program. With the Italian countryside as his canvas, the video features real students, teachers and local life. His video is shown to those who want to enroll in the program.

In Florence, he became a soccer fan. Now, he never misses a Fiorentina soccer game on TV. His next project with Greenhouse Media Group, a company he started with friends, will take him to Tanzania, Africa where he'll film people attempting to climb Mount Kilimanjaro.

\* \* \*

While enjoying her French onion soup along the Champs-Élysées in Paris, Leah Weitz was approached by a black-haired girl no older than 10 with red ribbons woven through her

hair. The girl tried to sell her a magazine and casually placed it on the table. Weitz told her she wasn't interested and the girl walked off. After the girl disappeared, Weitz noticed her phone had, too.

For Weitz, an energetic and animated 23-year-old City College student, the outside world was her classroom.

"Life experiences governed my life more than school," she says. In spring of 2005, after losing a close friend to senseless violence and another to an unfortunate accident, she went to Paris to study at La Sorbonne for four months. It was her first time out of the country without her family.

"Every experience in life, good or bad, has something to offer you as a person," she writes on her blog. "You can grow and learn from each experience or let apathy consume you."

Weitz learned to speak French and studied art history during her trip to Europe. She and her friends did a "café crawl," visiting places Hemingway and Van Gogh had frequented. Trips to the Louvre and weekend outings to nearby countries by train became routine. She stayed in a dorm and was on her own. Looking back, Weitz wished she had stayed with a French family. It would have forced her to practice her French more and experience the day-to-day culture.

Her dorm roommate was former Vice President Dan Quayle's niece, Tracy Quayle. She also made friends with Solano, a West Indian rapper who she still keeps in touch with.

Her trip to Paris gave Weitz the confidence to face the world, no matter what obstacles lie in her path.

Her wanderlust didn't end there. Weitz says she hopes to one day complete another program abroad.

"The programs encourage you to be a different person. I got to step outside my box. It humbled me. I learned to tolerate other cultures, because I was the foreigner."

## How to Study Abroad

The Study Abroad Program at City College of San Francisco offers both semester and short-term programs in a variety of locations around the world.

Participants in the program can earn college credit. All courses are transferable to California State colleges and most are transferable to the University of California.

California residents pay a \$20-per-unit enrollment fee. Non-residents pay \$190 per unit. Enrollment fees are separate from listed program costs.

Any City College student 18 or older with a 2.0 grade point average or better is qualified to apply for the program.

Program participants stay in dormitories, the homes of local families, furnished student apartments or hotels. Meal plans vary.

Groups of 15 to 35 students spend three months in semester-

long language and culture programs. This summer, they will study in Oaxaca, Mexico; Beijing, China; and Johannesburg, South Africa. Next fall, courses will be offered in Florence, Italy and Paris, France. Next spring — Madrid, Spain.

The summer programs in Oaxaca, Beijing and Johannesburg cost between \$2,500 and \$5,000 (airfare included). The fall programs in Europe range between \$6,000 and \$8,000 and do not include airfare.

Financial aid and scholarships are available. The Study Abroad Program is open to students, faculty, staff and members of the community.

Those interested should sign up early. Contact Jill Heffron in Cloud Hall room 212, call (415) 239-3778 or visit the Web site at: [http://www.ccsf.edu/Departments/Study\\_Abroad/](http://www.ccsf.edu/Departments/Study_Abroad/)

# A Giant comeback







*Gibril Wilson has a Super Bowl ring and a brand new \$39 million contract with the Oakland Raiders. Seven years ago, he was playing for the City College Rams.*

**By Alex Dixon**

**G**ibril Wilson walks into Carrows Restaurant near the Oakland Coliseum, pauses briefly at the hostess station, then proceeds to a booth by the window. He has a buzz cut and the hint of a mustache.

At 6 feet, 209 pounds, he's smaller than expected. He's wearing a black leather jacket, blue jeans and a gray T-shirt embroidered with a hawk. He keeps his sunglasses on until he sits down.

When the waitress approaches, he orders salmon, rice, mashed potatoes, corn bread and a tall iced tea.

A silver, diamond-studded star hangs from a chain around his neck. He wears an expensive Breitling watch on his wrist and a large diamond stud in his left ear. For a kid from Sierra Leone, a poor West African country known for its diamonds, he's come a long way.

One piece of jewelry, though, is missing: The Super Bowl XLII ring he earned in February as the starting safety for the New York Giants is still at the jeweler's.

At 26, he's at the top of his game. He became an unrestricted free agent at the end of the 2007 season. Within days, the Oakland Raiders offered him a six-year, \$39 million contract — \$16 million guaranteed.

Just seven years ago, he played for coach George Rush's City College Rams. In 2000 and 2001, his team went undefeated and won the national championship. Wilson was named junior college All-American his second year. He transferred to the University of Tennessee, where he received a spot on the All-Southeastern Conference first team.

After graduating with a bachelor's in sociology, he was drafted by the New York Giants in 2004.

Four years and 276 solo tackles later — an NFL record for a safety within that time span — Wilson and the 14-and-6 wild card Giants survived the playoffs to face the undefeated New England Patriots in the Super Bowl.

The game, considered one of the most exciting in Super Bowl history, wouldn't be determined until the final seconds. During the Giants' 17-14 win, Wilson made three solo tackles, two assisted tackles and one interception. In the last defensive play of the game, he batted down a pass from Patriots quarterback Tom Brady, ending New England's hopes for a perfect season.



Photo by Al Lin

*Gibril Wilson is returning to the Bay Area to play for the Oakland Raiders. Opposite: Wilson, No. 28, and cornerback Corey Webster cover New England Patriots wide receiver Randy Moss during the New York Giants' come-from-behind Super Bowl win in February.*

For a football player, it doesn't get much better than that. "It was just everything you always dream about," Wilson says. "As a kid growing up, at every level, you always try to get to the championship. And I realized, 'Well, I've reached the championship. In junior college and now in the NFL.'"

\* \* \*

Wilson guards his past as closely as he guards opposing receivers. However, he does reveal that he was born in Sierra Leone, a country marred by decades of violence and political unrest. Despite recent improvements, in 2007 it ranked last on the U.N. Human Development Index.

Wilson's parents and aunt emigrated when he was 5 and raised him in San Jose. He can still speak Sierra Leone's Creole language. His five older siblings — Sheriff, Yussuf, Alhassan, Makuta and Hassanatu — all live in the U.S.

Somewhere along the line he learned what football was — a game played with an ovoid ball, not a round one as he was led to believe in Sierra Leone. He began playing when he was 9. By the time he turned 18, he was the starting cornerback for San Jose's Oak Grove High School and had been named Defensive Co-Section Player of the Year.

In February 2000, while Wilson was getting a haircut in a San Jose barbershop, a City College student told him about the school's football program. Not long afterward, he called

the college's athletic department and was put in touch with George Rush.

"I wanted to go to the best junior college, and City College was it," Wilson said.

When the two met, Rush recalled that Wilson was not like the hundreds of other players he'd met in his 30 years as head coach.

"A lot of kids come in wearing high school jackets," he said. "They've got so many medals and writing and badges all over them, they look like retired Army generals."

But Wilson didn't wear anything on his sleeve. He didn't even mention his player of the year award. "Most guys, it would be the first thing out of their mouth," Rush said. All Wilson talked about was how badly he wanted to play for City College.

Wilson told Rush, "I'll be the ball boy. I'll be third string. I'll be on special teams. I'll do whatever it takes. I just want to be with you guys."

It was an approach that struck the coach as different and refreshing.

Wilson says, "I just wanted to play."

Rush wanted to learn more about Wilson's abilities, so he called a friend in the South Bay.

"This isn't just some guy," his friend told him. "This guy is the Defensive Co-Section Player of the Year. This is the guy you want."

In the summer of 2000, after high school graduation, Wilson began practicing at City College. He tried out for cornerback, but Rush moved him to safety, the position he would later play in the Super Bowl.

While other players drove across town to practice, Wilson took CalTrain from San Jose to San Francisco's Bayshore Station and then took a bus to City College — a two-hour commute. His dedication paid off. In 2000, he made the All-Conference team. A year later, he was first-team junior college All-American.

"Everybody works hard and all that," Rush said. "But he just has this passion to be the best and he's willing to do whatever it takes to get there. A lot of people say that, but in fact don't do it. He does."

In his 30 years as coach of the offense for City College, Dan Hayes has rarely seen anyone more competitive or hard-

working than Wilson. "He just competed every day in everything he did, whether he was in the weight room, doing drills or just running conditioning," Hayes said. "He'd just strive to always, always be first."

On the field, Wilson didn't just go through the motions. He asked veterans on the team for tips. He also put in extra time weight lifting and watching game film.

"He was intense," said Lawrence Turner, who played with Wilson for two years, went on to sign a contract with the 49ers and is now a personal trainer. "He was a hard, hard worker — a perfectionist on the field."

Turner recognized Wilson's genius in a game against Santa Rosa Junior College. Wilson was covering the intended receiver, Turner recalled. "He turned and looked back at the ball, but the way he caught it — it just seemed like he never even saw where the ball was going. He just put his hands in a totally different spot and intercepted the pass. That was big."

On the sidelines, Wilson's attitude about football was infectious. He simply couldn't wait to play.

"Not everybody's like that," Rush said. "I mean, they like playing and all that stuff. But they just don't have that little boy in them, like it's their birthday party and they can't wait to get there. Like 'Let's start the party,' and your mother says, 'No. We're not ready. The guests aren't here yet.' But he's ready to go," Rush said. "It's fun to be around guys like that."

In 2000 and 2001, the two years that Wilson played, the Rams won the national championship and went undefeated. Rush said they were perhaps the best community college football squads ever.

After playing at the University of Tennessee for two years, Wilson went pro. He was drafted 136th out of 255. When Giants starting safety Shaun Williams got injured at the beginning of the 2004 season, Wilson stepped in and played like a first-round pick. Weeks into his NFL career, he was named Defensive Rookie of the Month.

But the best was yet to come.

Wilson had always dreamed of playing in the Super Bowl, and in 2007 his dream came true.

"Super Bowl Sundays are like a holiday now," he said.



Photo Courtesy of George Rush

*After his Super Bowl win, New York Giants free safety Gibril Wilson celebrated with his former City College coach, George Rush.*





*Wilson did a dance for the fans in the University of Phoenix stadium tunnel after the Giants upset the heavily-favored New England Patriots.*

Photo by Win McNamee / Courtesy of Getty Images

"Knowing every single house was going to have the Super Bowl on, being in the game — it was just incredible."

With an audience of 97.5 million viewers, Super Bowl XLII was the second most-watched TV show in history. But Rush had his TV off. Wilson had given him a ticket. He was among the 70,000 people at the University of Phoenix Stadium.

With 35 seconds left in the game, the Giants had just completed an 83-yard drive up the field for a touchdown, taking the lead 17-14.

After the Patriots received the ball, they desperately tried to get into field goal range. The game, the season and the championship all came down to this moment.

On fourth down, with 10 seconds left, Patriots quarterback Tom Brady threw a 70-yard Hail Mary pass to wide receiver Randy Moss. Wilson shadowed Moss downfield, went up for the ball and batted it down. It was the Giants' last defensive play of the game.

"When the clock went zero-zero-zero, that's my memory," Wilson said. "Being part of that last play, knocking a ball down. It was just amazing."

The long-shot Giants had won. The game was over. Wilson had only one field pass for after the game. He gave it to Rush.

Down on the field, Rush had never seen Wilson happier.

"To see him so happy made me happy," he said. "It wasn't the Super Bowl or (everything) around it, just seeing him so happy, seeing him have such success and being on the big stage for the moment, having his day in the sun, was worth everything to me."

"The bottom line is that nobody's worked harder to have

the success he's had," he added.

Coach Hayes says Wilson's been handling the success well. "Every time you see him, he's humble. The way he was when he was here is exactly the way he is now — and it's sincere."

"He's a regular guy," Rush said. "Some guys have new-found wealth and want everybody in America to know they've got it. He's not like that. He's not showy."

Wilson hasn't made any major purchases lately, apart from a Mercedes, a house in the Oakland Hills and a couple of Swiss watches for his friends. "I want to be set for life," he said. "I don't want to blow my money."

Thirty-nine million goes a long way.

Wilson plans to start a foundation for children in Sierra Leone. Unlike other educational foundations, most of which provide partial assistance to a large group, his will educate kids one at a time, all the way through high school.

In the wake of the horrible civil war there, Sierra Leone could use the help.

"There are so many kids that are war orphans just kind of wandering around," Rush said. "He's investing his money and his energy into trying to help them because I think he believes education is the key to ending poverty and misery."

When Wilson flew to Sierra Leone recently, the president greeted him when he got off the plane. He was received as a national hero.

But you'd never know it from seeing him sitting in a booth at Carrows.

"I'm just a normal guy fortunate enough to play a game for a job," he says. "I'm no different than anybody else."



Photo Courtesy of Marty Arbunich

In 1967, Marty Arbunich wrote a music column called "Labelled and Recorded" for City College's *Guardsman* newspaper.

# Thoroughly modern Marty

## Former *Guardsman* editor publishes his own magazine

By Jenny Herr

**F**orty years ago, Marty Arbunich wrote his first music column for *The Guardsman*. It was spring 1967 and the Summer of Love was right around the corner. Arbunich was 19.

The Beatles' hit singles "Strawberry Fields Forever" and "Penny Lane" had just been released. Jefferson Airplane's "Surrealistic Pillow" album was being played on all the local progressive radio stations.

There was a lot to write about, and Arbunich's timing was impeccable. The San Francisco music scene was just beginning to take off. The Avalon Ballroom and Fillmore Auditorium featured local groups like The Grateful Dead, Country Joe and the Fish, Sly and the Family Stone, and Quicksilver Messenger Service. Flower power was blooming, acid rock was in and the Vietnam War protest movement was in full swing.

"The Doors, Procol Harum, The Mamas and the Papas and dozens of other groups were coming out with great albums every week," says Tom Graham, one of Arbunich's former classmates.

"Marty reviewed unreleased albums for his *Guardsman* column 'Labelled and Recorded' and got into a lot of concerts free," says Graham, a retired copy editor and writer for the *San Francisco Chronicle* who is now a journalism instructor at City College. "It was a pretty good perk."

Today, the basement of Arbunich's Outer Sunset home looks like the back stacks of a library — rows of white shelving from floor to ceiling filled with more than 18,000 LP records from the '60s and '70s. A smaller but still meticulously organized collection of 45 rpm records sits on top of the shelves, packed in long brown boxes. There isn't enough



room to display both.

No one else goes down there except the occasional visitor, and the cat.

Wearing glasses, blue sweatpants, white tennis shoes and a black Hawaiian shirt with orange-and-white hibiscus flowers and S.F. Giants logos, Arbunich is diligently working in his office, which is located next to his record collection.

As editor and publisher, he's putting the finishing touches on the current issue of CA-Modern magazine, which he founded two years ago.

Arbunich has a thing for modern architecture, especially Eichler homes. In 1991, he was visiting a friend who had just moved into one. The architectural design caught his attention. The home's slightly slanted roof and floor-to-ceiling windows looked futuristic, like something out of a Jetsons cartoon.

The homes, built by developer Joe Eichler, became ubiquitous in the Bay Area between 1950 and 1974. More than 11,000 were built in Northern California by Eichler's company.

"Their building legacy, liberal values and endless rich stories just sucked me in," Arbunich says. "The rest just came naturally. I think it has much to say about how I approach things that interest me — with great passion, and at times with almost mindless obsession."

When he was growing up in the Mission District, he collected butterflies, coins and comic books. Today, his magazine and his CD and record collection take up all his time.

"As a kid, every day was devoted to my hobbies, and it felt so good to just let myself become consumed by them," he says. "Later, this was true of collecting music and running a record store and label. They were what enriched my life and made me happy. Eichler homes are just another extension of this passion-fueled drive."

Arbunich's magazine, which has a circulation of 30,000, started in 1993 as a black-and-white newsletter. Today, CA-Modern magazine is a full-color quarterly publication that targets consumers interested in Eichler homes, Streng homes, Cliff May ranch houses and Palm Springs classics. The magazine features home maintenance tips, design trends, furnish-

ing suggestions and profiles of homeowners and architects. It's mailed free to Eichler and Streng Bros. homeowners in Northern California and to many owners of modern homes in Palm Springs and Southern California. Arbunich makes his money off the advertising.

His success as a magazine publisher is based on his business sense, his journalistic skills and his attention to detail. The way he began distributing his magazine is a story itself.

"Most of our Eichler mailing list on the peninsula was produced by painstakingly driving the tracts looking for Eichlers and logging addresses," Arbunich says. "My assistant drove. I had a notepad and a pile of other paperwork on my lap. We worked from a Thomas map dotted with tiny pushpins



Arbunich collected records while writing for *The Guardsman*. He later launched two record labels of his own. Today, his basement is filled with more than 18,000 albums from the '60s and '70s.

mounted on cardboard backing. It was sort of like digging for buried treasure with a treasure map giving us rough directions to the gold. It was a primitive system and an uncomfortable one to work under, but it sure got us what we wanted."

"Before we knew it, it was a phenomenon," says Jane Blonien, Arbunich's wife.

"Marty is responsible for the enormous cult following of Eichler homes," she says. "Every once in awhile we will go to some Eichler function and it is amazing how people respond to him. They listen to his every word."

In addition to his magazine, Arbunich coproduced "Eichler: Modernism Rebuilds the American Dream," a book

*Continued on page 30*





By Matt Adams

**I**t's been raining all morning. Rivulets of water are running down the trail. As I make my way up the mountain through a light drizzle, steam rises from my sweat-soaked jersey. An orange and yellow full-face helmet swings from the handlebars, keeping time with each pedal stroke. It's a long, three-mile, thousand-foot climb on my 40-pound downhill bike.

From the top, the Pacific Coast is blotted out by curtains of rain. The trailhead is obscured by bushes. It's 3:30 p.m. It took half an hour to get here. The three trails down will take only 15 minutes to descend. I pedal hard from a standing start. Within seconds my goggles are speckled with mud. There's no time to wipe them.

The bushes lining the narrow path pass in a blur. I hit 15 mph approaching the first turn. The fat rear tire slides to the left. No braking. Faster and faster. I hear the wind whistling through the holes in my helmet. I hit the first jump weightless, floating three feet off the ground and landing 15 feet farther down the trail.

As the terrain steepens, my bike's suspension absorbs the shock of a 20-foot-long, steep, jagged rock outcropping. At 25 mph, the next turn is sharp. I brake slightly, whipping

the bike around to the left, shooting dirt from the tires. Then back to the right, as the steep trail, called "The Crack," snakes down Pacifica's Montera Mountain.

Three trails — "The Crack," "The Mile" and "Boy Scouts" — traverse Montera Mountain. They're among the premier mountain biking trails in the Bay Area. Professionals train here.

I ride my mountain bike here six days a week, two hours each day. As a professional cyclist, I'm skilled enough to compete against the best. But my chances of making a living from racing are slim to none. So far I haven't made a cent, but I just got my pro license in December.

"Professional mountain bike racers make between nothing and around \$60,000 a year," says Joe Lawwill, BikeSkills instructor and Masters Downhill World Champion in 2002. "Racers that make over \$10,000 probably make up about five percent of the total." I hope to be one of the lucky few who will make a living from riding a bike.

SWD, a small company based in Modesto, Calif., has agreed to sponsor me for the 2008 season. They have given me most of a bike. A machine that would normally have cost more than \$5,000 cost me \$750. My estimated cost for the

*Matt Adams practices jumps during a training session last June at Northstar-at-Tahoe ski resort near Truckee.*

*Photos Courtesy of Adams Video Services*





# Ups and Downs

## of a Professional Mountain Biker

season's travel, food and miscellaneous expenses is \$7,000. It will all come from my own pocket. Before even attending a race, I'm at negative \$750 for my first professional season. Working as a busser at Nick's restaurant in Pacifica, I don't make enough to support my cycling career.

The road to this point has been difficult. My years at Terra Nova High School started well. Every day I came home, did my homework and went biking with friends from school. I dreamed of one day being one of the pros on the biking videos we watched. I'd never seen marijuana, never tasted beer. I had a 4.0 GPA.

\* \* \*

The day after my 15th birthday, I sit in the back of a minivan, watching the cows and windmills slide by at 55 mph. Vasco Road winds from Livermore toward Brentwood. We turn onto Camino Diablo Road. Sand Hill Ranch, the Bay Area's only commercial bike park, is just over the next hill. As the car stops we jump out, running to pay the \$10 fee.

I am first to the top, first to start. My new bike is fast. Accelerating at the slightest touch, turning on a dime, I finish the first run with a smile and hurry back up.

My memory of the day ends with walking up for the

second run. My mom was the only one to witness what happened next. "I watched you come down the hill, go off a big jump. I saw your front wheel fly off your bike, your face plant into the next jump. Your legs went up over your head twice. When I got up to you, there was a pool of blood around your head. Your face was rooted in the dirt. Two other bikers told us not to move you. You started moaning. When spasms started rocking you, we called the ambulance. The paramedics called the helicopter. I was scared you had broken your spine, that you were permanently injured. All I could do was pray."

I had a massive concussion, aching back, facial abrasions and a torn inner lip. It was a month before I could stand and walk, and two months before I could ride a bike. My life changed. My grades plummeted. I couldn't concentrate.

My mom asked me to quit downhill. "It's too dangerous," she said.

I didn't quit, though the accident had been painful and expensive. A \$1,000 ambulance ride down the hill, a \$17,000 helicopter ride to the hospital and a \$3,000 overnight stay at John Muir Trauma Center. My parents' insurance covered me.

Eight months later I broke my foot. I hit a jump going too fast. My foot came off the pedal, which hit me in the shin,





*Top: Matt Adams prepares for his first professional race on a mountain trail near Pacifica.*

*Right: He hones his skills on a trail above Carlmont High School in Belmont.*



ripping away tissue, exposing bone. I limped home. More stitches and a walking cast. I couldn't ride for two months. Depression set in.

I gained 15 pounds, got drunk for the first time and smoked my first bowl of marijuana. I loved it. Bonfires at the beach became routine. Friends and I would sit around the fire and drink until curfew. I continued to bike but crashed more often. Hangovers and downhill racing don't mix well.

At 16, my GPA had dropped from a 4.0 to 2.5. I was drinking a six-pack of Budweiser and smoking pot every Friday and

Saturday night. My parents were constantly on my ass, which pissed me off. I drank more. We fought. They enrolled me in an eight-week rehab program at Kaiser, which took me 12 weeks to complete. We fought more.

The next three years were hell. A blur of parties, fights, girls, drugs and school.

After high school, I moved to San Diego with my girlfriend. I started working in a bike shop 40 hours a week and had my own place for the first time — a one-room apartment near San Diego State. On several occasions, friends told me I was an alcoholic.

Sangria was my drink. Ralphs usually had sales on four-liter jugs of Carlo Rossi. A \$7.99 jug would last a night or two, always accompanied by a pack of cigarettes and a bong.

My lungs hurt from smoke, my stomach ached from drink. I was having too much fun to quit. My money went toward rent and partying rather than food. I lost 25 pounds.

After I tried cocaine, I knew something had to change. I couldn't afford another addiction. I felt sick every day.

One night, two friends and I blew through an eight-ball of cocaine, a five-liter box of wine and an unknown amount of pot. I called in sick to work the next day. Even after eight hours of sleep, I felt like crap. I walked into the kitchen; two weeks of dishes were piled in the sink. There was no beer to lift my mood, no money to buy more.

I realized that if I kept going down this path I would end



up on the streets. The thought scared me enough to stop drinking — cold turkey.

A week later I started training on my bike again. My weight loss became an advantage. I still smoked cigarettes and pot and I was still broke, but I was happier. For 10 months I lived — and starved — in San Diego.

A year ago I moved back to Pacifica. It was the best decision I'd made since leaving.

Two months after I moved back, I was training every day for my first semi-pro race, the Cougar Mountain Classic, held at the Infineon Raceway in Sonoma.

At the starting gate, the official calls "Number one! You go on the sixth beep." Deep breaths. One ... two ... three ... four ... five ... six. I take off, pedaling hard.

The first turns go by in a blur. Tires slide through the dust, shooting dirt and rocks into the air. Faster and faster, the trail steepens and turns simultaneously. No mistakes so far. I make the most difficult turn, barely slowing. My breathing is measured, calm. The butterflies swarming in my stomach all morning are gone. I speed across an off-camber section, careful not to slide. I make the first switchback and fly into the second. My tires lose traction. I fall but do not let go. My elbow takes the brunt of the crash. Bleeding, I push myself up, still on the bike, and pedal.

I didn't lose too much time. I pedal up and over the jumps, E.T.ing through the air. I come around the last banked turn, then pedal across the finish line, panting.

Thirty minutes later I stare blankly at the white results page. I won.

\* \* \*

My second year of racing, a shop opened up in Pacifica. The shopping center is old and shabby. It's easy to drive right by; there's no foot traffic. Three bikes stand outside, tethered to a pole. "Blastenhoff Custom Bicycles," the sign reads.

"Help you with anything?" Ken Aragaki says from behind the counter. He slouches in a small, green, overstuffed chair, coffee in hand, hungover. He gave me my first job four years ago and has become a close friend, mentor and sponsor. Ken watched me grow up; I watched his shop go bankrupt.

Ken's cleaning an old beach cruiser. Rust falls steadily from the poorly kept steel. He loves to tell friends about the kid who went pro. "He walked in here a punk-ass kid! Never had a problem with his work, but damn, he bitched a lot! Reminded me of myself when I was that age. Now look — a responsible young man. Going pro in a dead-end sport."

\* \* \*

The climb from the bottom of "The Crack" to the top of "The Mile" is short but steep. Most people walk their 40-pound bikes up. I ride. The rain is coming down harder now. I keep my helmet on because it keeps my head warm. At the top of the trail I pause. Donning my goggles, I take a deep breath, focusing on the task ahead. It's going to be slippery.

I pedal into the first straightaway. The trail is badly rutted from the skidding of less-experienced riders. As my rear tire slides into a rut, I push off the side of the trail with my foot for balance. Big mistake.

As my foot touches the ground the pedal hits me just above the ankle. Pain shoots instantly up my leg. Stopping, I gently apply weight to the hurt limb. Something inside my ankle moves. It's broken.

Two miles and four rock outcroppings away from my car, I try not to panic. I have no cell phone and I don't want to risk further injury by walking. I sit down on the bike and slowly, painfully, ride down the steep trail. Somehow I make it.

Five hours later I have the doctor's prognosis. My right fibula is fractured just above the ankle. I'll spend two weeks on crutches, another four in a walking cast.

My rookie season was off to a rocky start. My grandmother died in January. I broke my leg the day after my 20th birthday in February. Steve DeLay, my friend and sponsor for the 2008 race season, died from pneumonia a week later.

For the first time in months, I craved the substances I had given up. I sought help. I took a class in ThetaHealing, a practice that teaches mental and physical healing through meditation. It changed my life.

My leg healed in four weeks. The orthopedist had told me it would take six

to eight. Since I couldn't ride, I used the time to strengthen my upper body with weight lifting. I meditated daily. Physical therapy involved swimming and strengthening exercises for my withered leg.

In mid-April, two months to the day after my accident, I competed in my first professional downhill race — at the world-renowned Sea Otter Classic in Monterey. That day, a rider in another race crashed and died of head and neck injuries. At the time, it didn't affect me. I didn't find out what had happened until days later.

I competed against the best in the world for the first time and finished 75th in a field of 98. Normally, I would be disappointed with this less-than-stellar performance.

All things considered, though, I won just by finishing uninjured.



Adams took fifth place in a semi-pro race in Snowmass, Colorado last August.



Capt. Ron Pruyn, right, addresses his crew in front of House 15, across from City College's Ocean campus, which is alma mater to many firefighters.

# City's Finest

*House 15 is home to a fraternity of firefighters from CCSF*

By Melissa Bosworth / Photos by Annabelle Day

Captain Mike Bryant gets a mischievous glimmer in his eye when he remembers the time his firefighters changed the dinner menu at the last minute. As part of a rookie's rite of passage, the house chef whipped up a special pasta dish instead of split pea soup.

"When you see somebody with their brains blown out, you've gotta be ready to come back to the station and eat linguine and clams in red sauce in an hour," Bryant says.

So just after the youngest firefighter in the company had seen his first dead body — a gunshot victim whose head was splattered all over the backseat of a car — the cook went back to the kitchen to prepare his linguine dish — a pretty graphic

reminder for a new recruit returning from a gruesome scene.

"For about half an hour he puked his guts out and cursed everyone in the company," Bryant says.

Bryant is fire captain at House 15, on the corner of Ocean and Phelan avenues, opposite City College's Ocean campus. Like most of the 50 firefighters who pass through House 15 each week, he's got lots of stories like these — and as senior officer at the house, it's his job to share them.

The linguine prank had a purpose. "The intention is to put the new person in the most stressful situation, because we have to deal with a lot of stressful situations," Bryant says.

Storytelling is the currency of knowledge here, so when





*Capt. Mike Bryant, left, supervises firefighters as they raise a 50-foot, 350-pound wooden ladder during a drill.*



*Meals at House 15 are a communal affair that can take all day. The chicken pesto sandwiches require ingredients from three different markets. They purchase their groceries in the neighborhood and call their morning shopping routine "making the rounds," which they do on the fire truck.*

the old-timers get to stringing yarns, the younger firefighters gather around to listen. A sign on the wall with a list of rules for probationary officers reads "Probie Proverbs." Bryant recites one of his favorites: "Probies have two eyes, two ears and one mouth for a reason."

Among the older firefighters here, there's a sense of reverence for firehouse lore. It's like telling campfire stories, except the crackling firewood is more likely to be the hardwood floor of an old Victorian or the roar of a "flashover" — an overheated room combusting as it reaches peak heat.

"The storytelling that goes on here — the knitting-circle gossip — is unlike anything else," says Bettrieta Kime, one of many City College graduates whose career has landed here, across the street from their alma mater. "Once you get in, people will share their knowledge. They want you to know."

In fact, House 15 is a learning center for all four houses in Battalion 9. The truck here has the largest footprint of any in San Francisco — covering Sunnyside, Bayshore, parts of the Sunset and the Mission, down to the San Francisco airport and sometimes Daly City. Because it's the only rig in Battalion 9, the firefighters from Houses 33, 39 and 43 come over here to practice with the ladders and heavy machinery.

"I think the biggest thing that stops people from getting hurt is that we train," Bryant says. "When something does happen, it's automatic."

It's not uncommon for the House 15 crew to stop the rig in the middle of the street and practice throwing a ladder up on a building. They've done dry runs on many of the buildings on the Ocean campus.

\* \* \*

The engine crew from House 43 is visiting House 15 at 9:30 a.m. to practice using the 50-foot ladder.

"And ... raise!" says Capt. Ron Pruyn. Two firefighters lunge forward, each pushing a pole that supports one side of the 350-pound hardwood ladder they're hoisting. Four other members of their company hold the ladder from its end. They heave one end into the air and the mammoth marionette stands erect. Every time it teeters, they totter.

Lt. John Tuiasosopo, who works on Truck 15, aims his video camera at the company, stepping back to capture the full height of the ladder. He wants to show the clip to his students.

Tuiasosopo teaches on Saturdays at City College's new Fire Academy. He's one of a number of firefighters from the SFFD who moonlight at the fire science department. He spends some Saturdays teaching at City College's airport campus and others at the Treasure Island training facility that the fire department inherited from the Navy.

Over the years, countless students from City College's fire

science department have become San Francisco firefighters. But this semester is the first time they've had a fire academy that offers the Firefighter 1 certification required by many departments.

According to Tuiasosopo, the firefighters who teach at the academy are sharing something that can't be found in a typical classroom. "A lot of us tell stories of our experiences," he says. "I think that's really important for the students."

Tuiasosopo's stories provide students with a sense of the fire department and more specifically the personality of House 15. Because the SFFD is slow to adopt department-wide policies, many of the rules at each house are dictated by tradition. Over the years, this decentralization has led all of the 42 houses in San Francisco to develop colorful reputations.

All new recruits spend their first few years with the department working at various houses with no permanent assignment. Eventually, they find a home.

"You get along with a lot of the guys, and you find a place that's the right fit for you," Tuiasosopo says. "Fifteen was perfect for me. There was a good amount of older guys who were able to teach me a lot."

Whether it's because of the people or the type of work, each house attracts a certain kind of person. Houses in the densest urban areas draw boisterous types, Bryant says. Some are even known within the department as "yelling houses," because the crews make such a ruckus.

The crew at House 15 leaves the screaming to their sirens. And with the broad geographical area that Truck 15 covers, there are plenty of occasions to fly down Ocean Avenue with horns blaring. They respond to all kinds of calls — car accidents, medical emergencies, drunken college students and even the occasional little old lady just looking for company.

\* \* \*

On a Saturday afternoon, Lt. Spencer Makao chats with Bettrieta Kime as several other firefighters watch TV on the new flat-screen, munch on homemade caramel corn and wait for a call.

Makao's in the middle of a story. "At three o'clock in the morning," he says, "you get a call. You find a little old lady



*Bryant discusses firehouse protocol with Larry the Bird, House 15's pet lovebird.*

sitting on her porch, purse in her lap, like this." He perches on a stool and imitates a woman clutching a purse — an odd pose for a mustachioed fire captain holding an unlit cigar. "You say: 'What's the problem?' and she says, 'I ran out of medication.'"

Kime laughs.

There are very few things the crew at House 15 won't laugh about. But they never get used to witnessing the deaths of the young and the very old.

And then there's one thing they hesitate to even bring up: casualties among firefighters themselves. In Bryant's career, two firefighters have died on the job. He knew them both. "When firefighters perish, a lot of people don't like to talk about it," he says. "It's like regurgitating the story of losing your brother."

Beyond that, anything is fair game.

"Most firefighters are desensitized," Bryant says. "We talk about things in a nonserious way." This is one of the coping techniques they learn early on from their superiors.

"That's the thing," says Tuiasosopo. "Laughing is a healthy way to deal with a traumatic event. Most people get accustomed to it pretty quickly." With the amount of gore firefighters see, they have to get tough fast.

"The first dead body I saw almost made me quit," Bryant says. It was a car accident victim whose mutilated body was still in the front seat.

"The guy was going about 90 miles an hour down Market Street. (The impact) turned his truck into a convertible,

snapped his neck and tore all the way down his chest." He gestures to his chest to show how the skin had been torn off the man's body. "You could see all his organs." The memory doesn't seem to trouble him any more.

Initially, the experience didn't either. "I thought it was cool," he says. "I didn't even think about it until later that night, when I was awake at 3 a.m., seeing the body. I was having flashbacks."

Bryant didn't need to ask for guidance. His mentors came to him unsolicited.

"The old timers saw me. After being in the fire department for some time you can see different things in different people. They said, 'Hey kid, this isn't the first one, and this isn't going to be your last one.'"

Years later, Bryant would sense a similar feeling in a new recruit who had seen his first dead body. Bryant knew the probie would be haunted by the image of a gunshot victim's brains — noodles in red sauce.

Bryant grimaces and rubs his fingers together as if he were holding a slimy mess of pasta. "You know what brains look like," he says, as if the image were commonplace.

The probie certainly figured it out.

"Now he's 12 years in, and he has no soul," Bryant says with a hearty laugh.

\* \* \*

Pruyn's company has just finished their lunch — the chef's special grilled chicken and pesto on fresh focaccia. No fatalities on their watch that day. The conversation slows, and Harry Yee takes out his camera. He's trying to recall the details of a three-alarm fire that they put out a few nights ago near the Glen Park BART station on Cuvier Street.

Since someone left an ax there, the five firefighters pile into the rig and head down to the scene. While retrieving the ax, the truck company takes the opportunity to stop in and evaluate their work.

"We usually come out after the fire to critique," Pruyn says. "We were here at midnight in the heat of action. Now we see what we could have done."

Aside from the boarded windows and a trail of soot where the escaping flames had crawled up its side, the house looks strangely intact.

The crew uncovers the ventilation hole in the side wall that they sawed out to release heat from the fire. Behind it, in the garage, the family's winter supply of firewood has met the right fate in the wrong room. On top of the pile is a blackened bicycle among charred bits of furniture. Where the staircase was, only the burnt stubs of its frame remain.

One by one, the firefighters duck through the hole to survey the damage. "See there," Pruyn says. He points to a spot where the two burned houses' walls touch.

"The V-pattern widens out in both directions. The fire travels up and out, so if you trace it down to the base of the V, you can find the origin."

In this fire, the flames traveled from an open stairwell in the original house through the wall of the neighbors' house. A dense web of trees and power lines around the house made it especially hard to get a ladder up to the roof to cut a ventilation hole.

By the time they found an unobstructed spot to put the ladder, they'd made a split-second decision to ventilate from the side.

The company files out of the splintery emergency window and replaces its plywood covering. They load back into the truck, laughing and chatting, enriched with another story to tell.

\* \* \*

Back at the house, Bryant tends to the house pet, a lovebird named Larry. The bird flies out of its cage and across the room to the kitchen, perching on the

glossy wooden ladder that serves as a pan-hanging rack. Larry chirps and Bryant chirps back, sucking the air in through his lips and letting out a bird call that's too good to be a spontaneous imitation.

"Larry's had two wives," Bryant says. "The first one was murdered, and the second flew away. The first wife, she got eaten by a rat. Larry just watched until she was half-eaten, didn't let out a peep until the rat went after him."

Manny Dacalanio, clearing cups from the table after lunch, walks back into the kitchen and notices that the bird is out, flitting from shoulder to shoulder of the firefighters around the room.

"Has Mike told you about Larry's wives?" he asks.

Of course he has. In this house, a good story doesn't go untold.



*In addition to fires, House 15 responds to car accidents, medical emergencies, drunken college students and even the occasional little old lady just looking for company.*



# A Kink in

*The old, abandoned brick building on the*

**Story by Miles Harrigan**  
**Photos by Jennifer Nichols**

**A**t the corner of 14th and Mission streets, a handful of people wait at the 49 bus stop, ignoring the turreted fortress behind them. Within the brick walls of the historic San Francisco Armory, 100 Kink.com employees are producing 50 to 60 installments of hardcore BDSM pornography each week for thousands of Internet subscribers.

Walking up the front steps toward the wood-and-glass entrance doors on the main floor, the first-time visitor to the newly Kink-ified Armory is unsure what to expect.

A security guard sits at a table in an entrance hall that resembles a middle school with its stone floors, wood-framed doors and gold light fixtures topped with energy-saving light-bulbs. A sign-in book sits next to a bowl of candy and a stack of magazines: *Time*, *Road & Track*, *Popular Science*. A poster titled "ABCs of First Aid" hangs behind the guard. The jeans-and-tattoos look of the steady stream of people passing through the lobby seems more Bay Area tech than L.A. porn.

After descending the stairs from the lobby, however, one quickly realizes that most of the kinky stuff happens in the basement. Among the props stored at one end of a large corridor are a psychologist's couch, and a Y-shaped rack perfect for tethering the naughty. A number of wooden carts stand in a line, each with supplies used in filming for Kink.com's 11 pay sites. In the background is the sound of Mission Creek, alive and flowing along the back wall of the immense old shooting range in the next room.

The cart belonging to Princess Donna, director and webmaster of *WiredPussy.com*, is a tidy collection of much of what the 26-year-old uses in shooting six or so scenes a month for the site with the tagline "beautiful women bound and shocked to orgasm." Ball gags, strap-ons and metal clamps hang from coat hooks on the inside of each door. Batteries and a voltage meter sit on shelves in the central compartment. Below these are neatly labeled drawers and plastic storage containers housing a mix of sex toys, rope-bondage supplies and electrical accessories.

"Wired Pussy is a girl-girl bondage and electro-play Web site that deals with female domination of another female, rope bond-



*Kink.com employee Marissa Drake-Lee, all tied up at the office.*

# the Armory

*corner of 14th and Mission has been transformed into a porn palace*

age and electricity," Princess Donna says. "I come up with ideas for all the shoots and do all the rope bondage for the shoots. I'm generally either in the shoots as the dom or I'm directing a guest dom."

As with the majority of Kink.com's other sites — and with BDSM (a condensed acronym for bondage and discipline, dominance and submission and sadomasochism) play generally — WiredPussy.com features at least one person in the "top" or "dom" (dominant) role and at least one person in the "bottom" or "sub" (submissive) role. In the case of WiredPussy.com, the dom mixes pleasure with pain — delivered by liberal applications of a large vibrator or vigorous use of a strap-on, electrified prods, pads, clamps and canes. The sub responds with yelps, moans and supplications.

The ordinariness of Princess Donna's pulled-back curly brown hair, black polo shirt and Converse All-Stars is a stark contrast to her leather-and-heels on-screen get-up. Poised and well spoken, she has been at Kink.com and in charge of WiredPussy.com for three and a half years. She joined Kink.

com almost immediately after getting a dual degree in gender and sexuality studies and photography from New York University, having worked as a part-time submissive model and director as a student.

"It's kind of my dream job," the Sacramento native says. "I get to be creative and create sexual imagery all day long, which is basically what I studied. My two majors combined pretty perfectly."

The warren of rooms in the Armory basement provides the canvas onto which Kink.com's sexual imagery is projected. Signs posted outside what used to be a horse stable during the building's military heyday urge quiet when passing what now appears to be, at least for the duration of a shoot, a dentist's office. Another former stable is devoted to sex machines of all shapes and sizes — most of which have been constructed by Kink.com employees on-site — including a dildo-equipped animatronic number, whose uncanny similarity to Number Five, the goofy robot from the '80s movie "Short Circuit," cannot be merely coincidental. In an old shower room,

the Armory's past and present converge: an antique claw-foot bathtub sits among vulture-like banks of movie lighting.

Completed in 1914 at a cost of about \$500,000 — including the land — the San Francisco National Guard Armory and Arsenal replaced its damaged predecessor after the 1906 earthquake. The new Armory was intended as a storehouse for weapons and equipment, as well as a place for Guardsmen's education and recreation. Bi-weekly public boxing matches were held in the gigantic Drill Court on the ground floor; today, its vaulted ceiling soars above employees' parked cars and bicycles.



*Princess Donna, director and webmaster of WiredPussy.com, keeps a tidy collection of sex toys.*



Use of the Armory declined in the 1960s, and the National Guard relocated to Fort Funston in 1973. Several scenes in "Star Wars" were shot in the Drill Court in 1976, but, despite the Armory gaining entry into the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, it remained tenantless until Kink.com moved in at the end of 2007.

On the way to the basement, the visitor's return to street level is halted by a blond, pixie-like figure exiting a bathroom in a plush red robe and black stiletto heels. Aiden Starr, a professional porn model and frequent visitor to Kink.com headquarters, is on a break from shooting for MenInPain.com. She responds favorably to a photo request, asking if she should doff the robe or leave it on.

"I love working for Kink," she says, in between (clothed) poses for the camera. "They pay well and treat their models really respectfully."



*Top: Built in 1914, the Armory dominates the corner of 14th and Mission streets. Above: Handcuffs and masks are among the toys available to Kink.com's directors.*

A production assistant suddenly appears to retrieve her. She is needed back on set, where she will spend the rest of the afternoon whipping, berating and pegging a male model for the at-home enjoyment of MenInPain.com subscribers.

Two floors above the basement, Brande Baugh, a Kink.com makeup artist and City College student, waits for her next model to arrive. Her bleached-blond hair is cut short and her shirt is cut low, revealing a number of tattoos scattered across



her upper body.

She likes her job, too. "I feel totally comfortable letting people know there are jobs available as talent," Baugh says. "I know that it's a really respectful company that is open to a wide variety of sexualities and isn't exploitative at all."

Scenes take about three to four hours to shoot, with pay rates from \$500 (for most male models and females in solo scenes) to \$1,300 (for females in scenes involving double penetration). Pre-op transsexual women featured as doms on TSSeduction.com earn \$1,500 for scenes that include "blow jobs and anal penetration of sub." A special rate of \$5,000 for five days — four days of shooting and one of rest — is designated for training a female bondage slave by a male dom in scenes for TheTrainingofO.com.

Baugh says 70 percent of the models she works with are part of the professional porn scene in L.A.

"We actually use a fair number of local models too, because of San Francisco's thriving kink community," she says. "The directors like the people who are in the shoots to be genuinely kinky people, and that doesn't often fall perfectly in line with someone who just works in mainstream porn."

Kink.com began in New York, in the apartment of founder, owner and CEO Peter Acworth. Acworth, a Cambridge University graduate and native of England, conceived of a BDSM Web site while pursuing a Ph.D. in finance at Columbia Business School.

"I came across a newspaper article about a fireman who was making a small fortune selling images on the Web," Acworth says.

"I had always been interested in bondage, so I started a Web site featuring bondage pictures called Hogtied.com. After that took off, I left the Ph.D. program and moved to San Francisco because it's a hell of a kinky city — I thought it would be a great place to run a kinky Web site."

Hogtied.com and Cybernet Entertainment (Kink.com's predecessor) — based in Acworth's Marina apartment — met with quick success. Hogtied.com was soon followed by FuckingMachines.com — think ecstatic women and dildo-wielding repetitive-motion machines — and WhippedAss.com, a female-on-female dominatrix-themed site.

As Cybernet's stable of sites continued to grow and the number of employees multiplied, the company moved into progressively larger spaces until 2003, when it made the jump to a 25,000-square-foot building in South of Market.

The size of the Porn Palace, as the building on Mission and 8th streets came to be known, allowed the eventual construction of 11 elaborate sets. In addition to filming, a number

of these sets were also used for Burning Man parties, fundraisers and BDSM workshops open to the public, a practice employees say they hope will continue at the Armory.

In 2006, the company changed its name from Cybernet Entertainment to Kink.com and bought the Armory later that year from a private developer for \$14.5 million. News of the purchase prompted a flurry of protests from local groups upset over the new occupant's line of business.

Earlier proposals — among them market-rate condominiums and dot-com office space — had failed, mostly because of the developers' financial difficulties or the public opposition to gentrification. Since Kink.com planned to use the existing structure without major structural modifications, they avoided time-consuming and costly planning regulations and approvals.

"Peter bought the building under a non-disclosure agreement and when we went public there was a certain outcry from the local community," says Thomas Roche, Kink.com's



*Kink.com model Aiden Starr on a break from shooting for MenInPain.com.*

public relations manager.

"They had concerns about if there was going to be some sort of debauchery here, but, as you can see, this place was built like a fortress, so it's not like there's going to be porn stars spilling out in the street in any way."

Indeed, to the casual observer, the San Francisco Armory remains as much a mystery as it did for all the years it lay empty. Its steps and loading ramps are still popular with skaters. Bar patrons still relieve themselves against its walls on their 2 a.m. stumble home. Only the black-and-blue flags of the BDSM community that crown it give a clue to the presence of the thriving kink factory inside.

# Former Guardsman editor now has his own magazine

Continued from page 17

considered the bible on the subject.

"Marty spends a tremendous amount of time, money and effort to create the best articles he can, both from a journalistic and a historic perspective," says Dave Weinstein, author of "Signature Architects of the San Francisco Bay Area" and a frequent contributor to the San Francisco Chronicle and Arbunich's magazine. "He does stuff that goes way beyond what he needs to do. He has to have the best, and he's willing to go the extra mile to get that quality."

\* \* \*

Arbunich transferred from City College to San Francisco State University in 1968 and majored in journalism. His ongoing interest in music landed him a job freelancing for

a London-based magazine called "Beat Instrumental."

"Virtually no one was writing about rock music at the time," he says. "I started before there was even a Rolling Stone magazine. Within a few years, everyone and their mother was a trendy rock journalist."

The fringe benefits of

working for the British magazine compensated for the measly \$25 an article he was earning.

"I recall walking up to the Winterland ticket window in '68 on four successive nights, flashing the peace sign with two fingers — which also meant 'two free tickets, please!' — and then getting treated to four nights of Jimi Hendrix," Arbunich says.

In 1974, he quit college with just a year left to go and began working at the Used Record Shoppe on Irving Street. He soon became co-owner.

He and his new business partner opened two more stores, one in San Rafael and the other in Mill Valley.

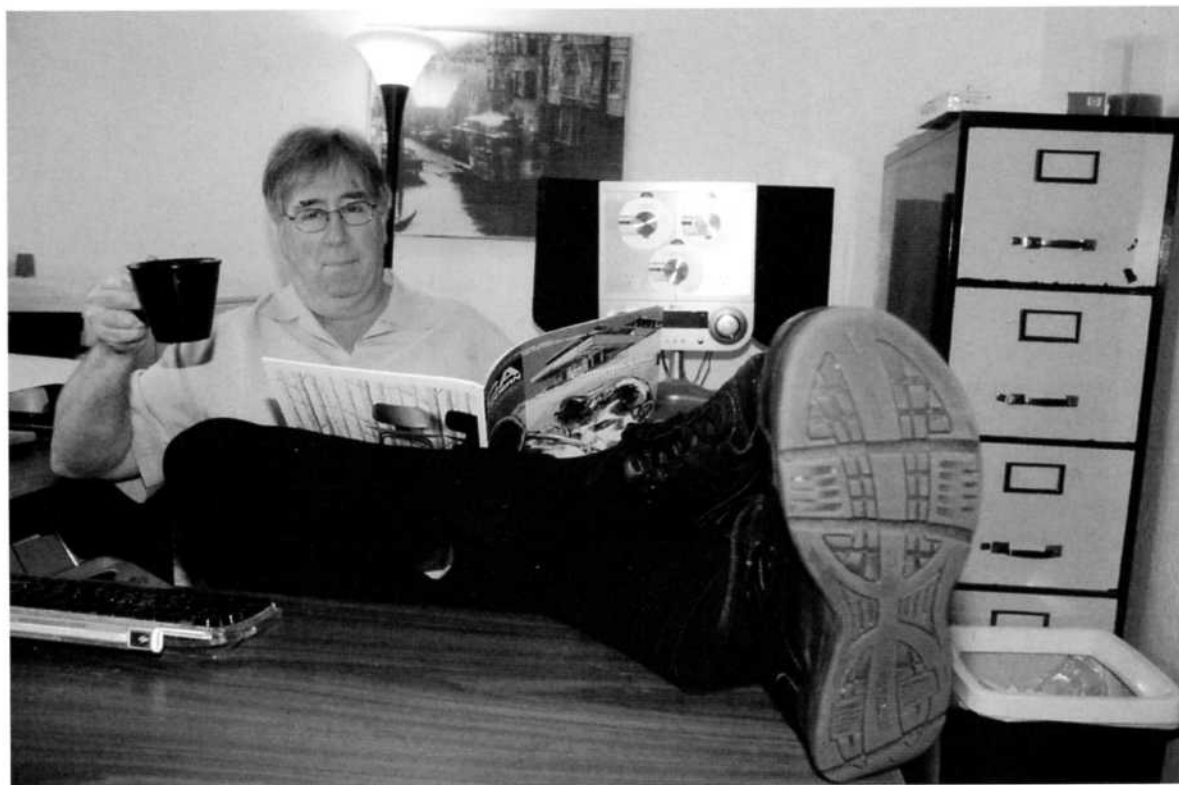
Meanwhile, Arbunich launched two record labels of his own.

"The mother label was called Solid Smoke Records, which produced reissues of music from the '50s and '60s," he says. "We also had another label, War Bride, which we used as a platform for contemporary artists."

Although the stores and the labels were successful, in 1989, Arbunich moved on.

"This phenomenon called CDs came out and he saw the business going in another direction that he wasn't interested in following," Blonien says.

"Here I was in a record store selling stuff I couldn't stand," Arbunich says.



Forty years after leaving *The Guardsman*, Arbunich started his own quarterly magazine, called *CA-Modern*, above, which reaches about 30,000 modern-home owners. He drove around the Bay Area identifying Eichler and other classic-style modern homes for his mailing list.

Photo by Michael P. Smith





*This Eichler home in Lucas Valley is one of many that have been featured in Arbunich's CA-Modern magazine. The magazine features home maintenance tips, design trends, furnishing suggestions and profiles of homeowners.*

Photo by Michael P. Smith

His personal life was taking a different turn as well. He got involved with the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring program and befriended an eight-year-old named Colin Stilwell. Arbunich, who has no children of his own, figured this was an opportunity to influence the younger generation.

"He was a mentor in so many ways, and a friend," says Stilwell, a dancer and massage therapist who now lives in Brooklyn.

The pair met once a week through the program, and although he wasn't really trying to, Arbunich became a father figure to Stilwell. They went to the movies, bowled and played sports together.

"He would be on a softball team and I would come. It involved me too," Stilwell says. "It got me out of my normal routine and way of living. It was also more sports related, which I was really into."

Stilwell didn't realize how much Arbunich would affect his life as an adult.

"(The friendship) has turned into a lot more guidance. He's really great at asking questions that make me question.

It's challenging in a way and I really appreciate it," Stilwell says, adding that Arbunich recently helped him financially when he was in massage school.

Stilwell admires his Big Brother's business sense and the way he handles others.

"I see a lot of positive energy that he always puts into his work," he says. "He has created this business that informs other people. The choices he makes fulfill him but also expand out to the community and the general public."

Where some might have succumbed to a mundane job or the bland comforts of a corporate lifestyle, Arbunich took his talents and transformed them into dream jobs.

He states it best in an editorial he wrote for his magazine:

"We launched an entertainment newspaper, opened three record stores, ran a record label producing 50 music albums, started a transcription business for video producers and even staged a concert at San Quentin Prison with soul brother James Brown — all without ever filling out a job application, negotiating a salary, stressing out about not having medical or 401(k) benefits or taking out a loan from the family."

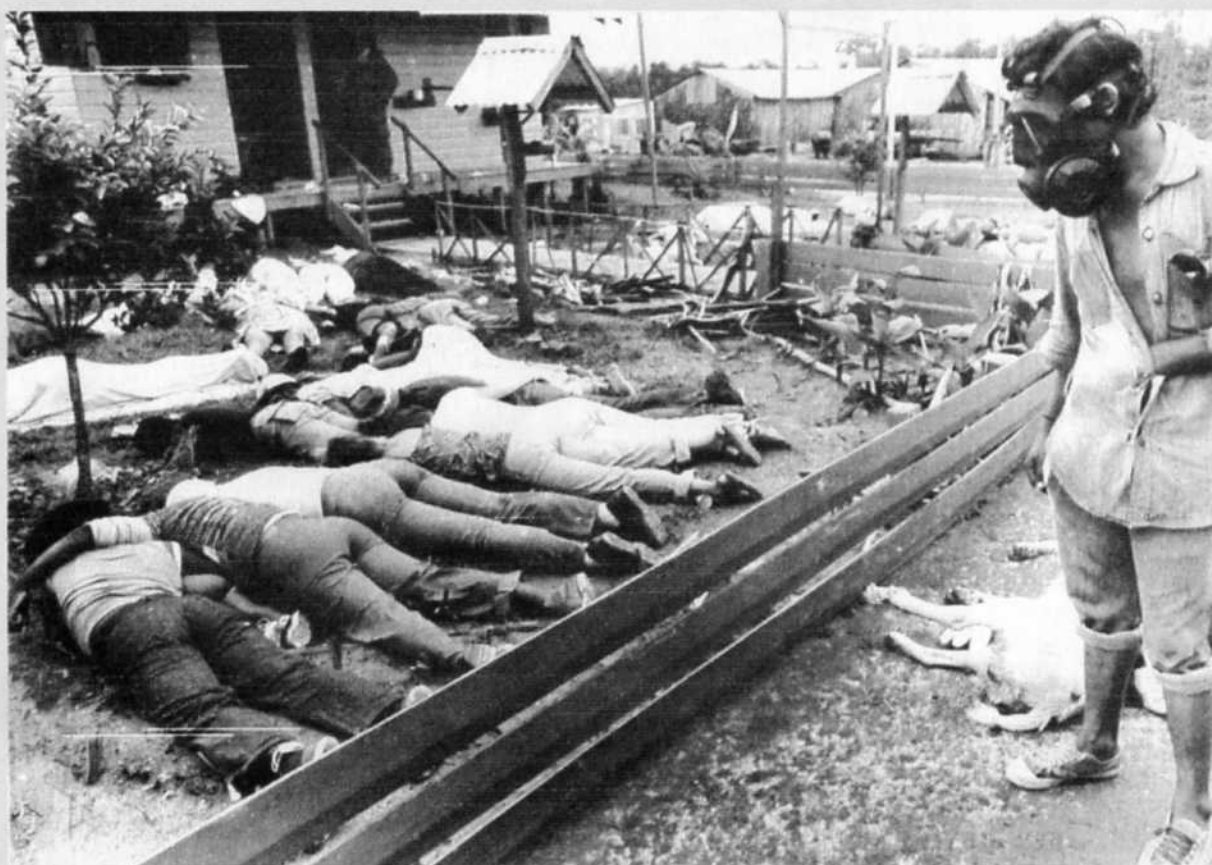


Photo Courtesy of United Press International / 1978

Three days after the tragedy, a government worker surveys the bodies of those who died at the Jonestown compound in Guyana.

# The last 'White Night'

Thirty years ago, more than 900 people died in Guyana. Two City College alumni witnessed the aftermath.

By Dave de Give

**S**herwin Harris was hopeful. After trying for more than a year, he was about to see his 21-year-old daughter Liane.

Liane and her mother Linda had followed the Rev. Jim Jones to the Peoples Temple Agricultural Project in Guyana, a Spartan compound carved out of the jungle. It served as headquarters for the church and as home for some 1,000 members of the Peoples Temple, who nicknamed it "Jonestown."



City College alumnus Sherwin was concerned about Liane. He tried repeatedly to contact her, but the Peoples Temple in San Francisco gave him the runaround. He had filed a missing persons report with the San Francisco Police Department when Liane was living in the city, and contacted the U.S. State Department when she moved to Jonestown — to no avail.

Desperate, Sherwin and other relatives formed a group to raise public awareness of the cult. U.S. Rep. Leo Ryan, D-San Mateo, became concerned by reports he



had been hearing and vowed to investigate.

Sherwin made the 6,000-mile trip from San Francisco to Guyana with a delegation of family members and reporters led by Ryan. They took a red-eye to New York on a Monday evening and switched planes for the long flight to Guyana, arriving in Georgetown, the capital, on Tuesday, Nov. 14, 1978.

After three days of negotiating with Guyanese officials and temple lawyers who were trying to prevent the delegation's visit, Ryan and his staff flew to the Port Kaituma airstrip near Jonestown on Friday.

Sherwin didn't go to Jonestown. He had been told that Liane had left the compound and was traveling by boat to Georgetown. Liane's mother, Linda Harris (Sherwin's ex-wife), phoned him at Georgetown's Pegasus Hotel to invite him to visit their daughter. "She called and said, 'Come to the house Saturday and have dinner with us,'" Sherwin says.

Linda ran the temple's house in the Lamaha Gardens neighborhood. It served as the living quarters for members who conducted business in Georgetown. Linda was Jones' right hand in Georgetown, maintaining frequent radio contact with him and his assistants in Jonestown.

Sherwin was ecstatic about finally being able to see his daughter.

"I went to Lamaha Gardens and Liane was there," he says.

Father and daughter spent most of the afternoon together at the house. That evening he sat down to dinner with Liane and Linda, and Linda's two younger children.

City College alumna Jordan Vilchez, Liane's childhood friend in the Peoples Temple, says, "I was there when her father came to visit that day. He took her on a walk and took photos of her and the two kids."

"I had high hopes," Sherwin says. "I felt I was making inroads. We made plans to meet again the next day to tour around Georgetown."

That evening, Sherwin returned to the Pegasus Hotel, ebullient. He remembers telling his friends there, "I'm very upbeat."

It was Saturday, Nov. 18, 1978.

\* \* \*

Today, Sherwin lives in a modest, 1970s-era home in the hills above Hayward. A cardboard poster of an American flag hangs in his living room window. He leans back in an

overstuffed chair, his tall, husky frame elongated. An African Grey parrot named Buddy perches on his left shoulder. On his right hand, he wears a Masonic ring. He's calm as he speaks of Liane and the tragedy that happened at Jonestown nearly 30 years ago.

By the late '70s, his visits with Liane had become increasingly rare. Sherwin and Linda separated and eventually divorced after Liane's birth in 1956. He attributes the breakup to marrying too young. Liane had lived with Sherwin for the first four years of her life until Linda took custody of her in 1960. When Linda and Liane moved to Ukiah in 1968, Sherwin still made regular weekend trips to visit them.

But gradually, Linda and Liane withdrew. Sherwin says the estrangement began after Linda and 11-year-old Liane joined the new Peoples Temple church in Redwood Valley, not far from their home in Ukiah.

Jordan Vilchez was 12 and living with her older sister when they joined the temple. Liane was one of the first kids in the temple to befriend her.

"For a kid, it was great," Vilchez says. "It was just fun." The church provided her with a sense of community. "Things were very light and easy, and there wasn't the feeling of heaviness that there was in later years. There were skits, entertainment and lots of singing." The temple also appealed

to adults. Jones preached a brand of social equality and collective activism that resonated with them. "A lot of people got sucked in when he talked about social justice and racism and equality," Sherwin says. "I think that part of it was legitimate."

In 1971, the temple purchased an abandoned synagogue on Geary Street in San Francisco's Fillmore District, where urban renewal projects had decimated a once-thriving African American community. By 1972, the temple had opened a new church in the Fillmore.

On the surface, the Peoples Temple fit in nicely with '70s San Francisco, providing care homes for senior citizens and foster homes for kids.

"We passed out clothes and food in the Mission and in the Fillmore," says Mike Touchette, who joined the temple when he was 18 and helped build the Jonestown compound. "We were involved in the anti-war movement."

In 1975, the Temple worked to help elect Mayor George



Photo by Al Lin

*Sherwin's African Grey parrot, Buddy, listens as he describes his last trip to see his daughter, Liane, in Guyana nearly 30 years ago.*

Sherwin Harris' daughter Liane, center, with her half-siblings Christa and Martin Amos at the Peoples Temple house in Georgetown, hours before they were killed.



Photo by Sherwin Harris / Nov. 18, 1978

Moscone. The new mayor appointed Jones to the city's housing commission. Temple members crowded into the commission meetings and cheered whenever he spoke.

But beneath the surface of the Peoples Temple, cracks were forming. Vilchez was working on the temple's planning commission and says meetings often lasted well into the early morning hours. It wasn't long after joining the temple that life became difficult, she says.

"By then, we were led to believe that life outside Peoples Temple was empty," Vilchez says. "We were told that things would become like a police state and that we would be rounded up for our beliefs, especially minorities. It was drilled into you, over and over and over."

Vilchez couldn't fathom leaving the temple. "I was really dedicated, and with the lack of sleep, fear and doom and gloom on the outside, I came to believe that I was only valuable as a person to the extent that I could help the cause," she says. "I literally did not exist in any other context. It's as if I was invisible to myself."

\* \* \*

In the summer of 1977, New West magazine published an exposé of the Peoples Temple, charging that it exploited and abused its members.

*Sherwin was encouraged by his visit with his daughter. 'I had high hopes,' he said. 'I felt I was making inroads. We made plans to meet again the next day to tour around Georgetown.'*

Liane had moved out of her mother's house and Sherwin didn't know where she was. She briefly attended Santa Rosa Junior College, where the Peoples Temple offered tuition and dorms for members. He thought she might be living in San Francisco, in Peoples Temple communal housing.

He called the temple in San Francisco, but the receptionist said she didn't know Liane. Frustrated, Sherwin filed a missing persons report with the SFPD. He soon received a phone call from Jones' wife, Marceline, who pleaded with him not

to contact the police again. The temple didn't want any more bad publicity. Then Sherwin got another call, this time from Liane. They made plans to meet in San Francisco.

But the day before they were to meet, Liane phoned again.

"She told me she had this wonderful opportunity to travel to Brazil with friends and that she would be watching their kids," Sherwin says. She told him she had to leave for Brazil right away and couldn't get together with him the next day as planned. "I took it at face value," Sherwin says. "I had no reason to think differently."

He later learned the truth. The story about Brazil was a fabrication. "That's when they shipped her out to Jonestown," he says.

Possible reaction from the New West article worried Jones.



He decided to speed up the group's move to Guyana. Members left overnight. "I didn't even have a chance to tell my mother, and I don't think I would have," says Vilchez, whose mother was not in the temple. "It wasn't anything they had to tell me, I just knew not to tell her."

A couple of weeks later, Sherwin received a letter from Liane extolling the virtues of Jonestown.

\* \* \*

The "White Nights" at Jonestown were a test of loyalty. An alert would go out over the loudspeakers. Petrified residents were informed the compound was in danger, and everyone was called to assemble in the pavilion. The threats varied: gunshots heard in the jungle; the CIA about to overtake Jonestown; a defecting high-ranking member threatening to expose temple secrets. Most residents had no way of knowing if the threats were real or not.

The meetings in the pavilion also served as training sessions for group suicide. Every White Night ended the same way: Members were ordered to drink from what they were told was a vat of poisoned Flavor Aid. Jones' justification for the act was that since the outside world wouldn't let them live as they chose to, it was better to commit an act of revolutionary suicide.

"At my first White Night in Jonestown, the call came out to come up and drink the Kool-Aid," Touchette says. "I went." He later learned the threats were often made up.

\* \* \*

Vilchez found a different reality at Jonestown.

"Things were so different," she says. "Once you got down there, you were expected to work in the fields, no matter what you did before arriving there."

One day, she had an opportunity to make the trip to Lamaha Gardens.

"It was an easier life in Georgetown," she says. "When I was there, I found a way to stay there. I went around the city and told people a spiel about the agricultural project and asked for donations. The deal was I could stay there if I made \$100 a day Guyanese." She still had to make regular trips to Jonestown. The temple didn't want people to get used to the idea of being away.

"I had just come back in (to Jonestown) before (Congressman) Ryan got there. Things weren't any more tense than usual," she says. The Cudjoe, the temple's boat, was scheduled to make the 24-hour return trip along the Kaituma River to Georgetown. Touchette was making the trip with members of the temple's basketball team, who had a game scheduled

with the Guyanese national team.

"Something told me to go out on the boat," Vilchez says. She had to ask Jones for special permission. It wasn't a trivial thing to do. "If you ask, it's suspect. I went down to his cabin and someone came out and I asked. They went inside and then came back out and said OK. I think they said OK because I had built up trust."

Vilchez says that if she had any intuition, she wasn't aware of it. "It was unconscious," she says. "I had no idea what would happen in the hours that would follow."

Liane had also received permission to make the trip to visit her father in Lamaha Gardens.



Photo by Al Lin

Jordan Vilchez, Liane's friend and a City College alumna, was downstairs in the Lamaha Gardens house when the "White Night" order came from Jonestown.

She and Vilchez had made it safely out of Jonestown.

\* \* \*

On Friday, Nov. 17, 1978, Ryan's delegation landed at Port Kaituma and arrived in Jonestown in the early evening.

The temple threw a big reception. Members performed musical numbers and the delegation received a lavish dinner in the pavilion. Ryan addressed temple members at the reception and told them he was there to learn. "I can tell you right now," he said, "that from the few conversations I've had with some of the folks here already this evening, that whatever these comments are — there are some people here who believe that this is the best thing they've ever had in their whole lives." He received enthusiastic applause.

But the tone quickly changed. Former state senator and current U.S. Rep. Jackie Speier, D-San Mateo, was Ryan's assistant. "Don Harris, who was the NBC reporter, came up to me and Congressman Ryan and handed us these two notes from people that wanted to leave," she recalled for PBS televi-

sion. "So at that point, we knew that something was very, very wrong."

On Saturday morning, 16 members were prepared to leave with Ryan. "When word got out that people were leaving, all hell broke out," Speier told PBS. In the pavilion, temple member Don Sly attacked Ryan with a knife, but was subdued before he could harm him. Sly cut his own hand in the scuffle. Ryan's blue dress shirt was covered in Sly's blood as the defectors and the delegation headed to the airstrip.

They were boarding the plane when a group of gunmen in a red tractor-trailer drove onto the tarmac, stopped and opened fire. They killed Ryan, three media members and one defector.

Speier, who lay on the ground next to the plane pretending to be dead, was shot five times. She survived.

\* \* \*

Back at the Pegasus Hotel, Sherwin and other concerned relatives were called into the manager's office one at a time. Inside, a Guyanese police official instructed each of them that they were not to leave the premises under any circumstances.

They had no idea what was happening at Jonestown.

Later that evening, Sherwin was taken back to the manager's office. The police inspector said to him, "Your daughter and ex-wife were found murdered this afternoon. We want a statement from you."

"I collapsed," Sherwin says. "I was paralyzed."

\* \* \*

Vilchez was downstairs in the Lamaha Gardens house when the White Night order came from Jonestown.

"I remember seeing Linda grab the kids and Liane and going upstairs," Vilchez says. "In the process, she gave the order that we were to do what they were doing in Jonestown."

"We had left for a short period of time, 15 to 20 minutes," Touchette says. "When we got back, we heard that (Linda) had gone upstairs and killed her kids."

Jones' son Stephan went upstairs with Touchette. "The door to the bathroom was closed," Touchette says. Inside, he saw Linda, Liane and her two half-siblings — 10-year-old Martin and 11-year-old Christa — on the floor. Their throats had been slit with a knife. Linda and her younger kids were already dead, but Liane was still moving.

"Liane kept trying to get up," Touchette says. "She did it like three or four times." He urged her to save her strength. "I remember Stephan and I were saying 'Stay down Liane, stay

down.' Then she finally went down for the last time, and that was it."

\* \* \*

Liane Harris Amos died nine days shy of her 22nd birthday. She, her mother and her siblings were the only four people killed at Georgetown as a result of the final White Night order.

More than 900 died at Jonestown.

Jordan Vilchez lost two sisters and two nephews there.

Mike Touchette lost his grandfather, his uncle, his mother, his sister, his brother and his cousin.

Sherwin had once purchased an open ticket in Liane's name from Pan American Airlines for a one-way flight from Georgetown to San Francisco. He sent it to the U.S. Consul in Georgetown and asked them to keep it on file. If Liane ever managed to make it out of Jonestown and wanted to come home, he wanted the ticket to be there, waiting for her.

After her body had been identified and released, he used the ticket to fly her home.

*'I remember seeing Linda grab the kids and Liane and going upstairs. In the process, she gave the order that we were to do what they were doing in Jonestown.'*

— Jordan Vilchez

After she arrived in Guyana, Sherwin's daughter Liane extolled the virtues of Jonestown in a letter she wrote to him.

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